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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 19, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of the All Parties Conference "unanimously backing" the government's counter-insurgency operation dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. All newspapers highlighted reports that the "troops locked in street battles" in Matta (a town of Swat valley) "killing 27 militants." Several English and Urdu language dailies published a NYT story that "U.S. believes Pakistan is rapidly expanding nukes." However, some major dailies underscored Admiral Mullen's remarks that "Pakistan has not diverted any U.S. assistance to advance its nuclear weapons program." The English daily, "The News," and sister Urdu paper "Jang," highlighted remarks attributed to Prime Minister Gilani that the "U.S. was playing a double game with Pakistan as we have never extended any secret cooperation to the U.S. for drone attacks." The English language daily, "Dawn," reported remarks ascribed to an American journalist Seymour Hersh that a "special death squad assassinated Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the orders of former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney."

Several major newspapers ran editorials on the end of civil war in Sri Lanka. However, some mainstream dailies editorialized various other subjects including the ongoing military operation, Pakistan nukes, and the new judicial policy. The center-right national English daily "The Nation" observed that "it would be hard to avoid the impression that the present military campaign has been conducted under pressure of the U.S." The Peshawar-based Urdu daily, "Mashriq," noted that the "militants' actions in the garb of Taliban, their suicide attacks and technological expertise demonstrate that some big powers in connivance with the enemies of Pakistan are hatching a conspiracy to strike at the foundations of Pakistan from within." Commenting on the President Zardari's determination to launch operation in Waziristan, the English daily, "The News," maintained that "we have to honestly and with steely resolve face and fight the threat that looms over all of us. Anything less and we all lose." End Summary.

News Stories

"Nation Speaks With One Voice: Crush 'Em!" "The News" (50/19)

"The all parties conference (APC) on Monday unanimously backed the government's counter-insurgency operation 'Rah-e-Rast' by adopting a 16-point resolution with the resolve to make efforts to unite the nation in the face of insurgency in Swat and the Malakand Division."

"U.S. Playing Double Game, Says Gilani" "The News" (05/19)

"Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani made a startling statement when he told the APC that the United States was 'playing a double game with Pakistan as we have never extended any secret cooperation to the U.S. for Drone attacks.'"

"APC Support With Lots Of Ifs And Buts" "The News" (05/19)

"The All Parties Conference (APC), held in Islamabad on Monday, remained divided on the issue of endorsing the ongoing military operation in Swat, but was unanimous in condemning the U.S. drone attacks. Those opposing the military operation were of the view that the military option should be used as a last resort, which was not done in case of Swat."

"TNSM Says It Will Fight Next Election" "The News" (05/19)

"Tanzim Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) has expressed its disappointment on the outcome of the APC but has promised to show its strength and response in the next general election, said TNSM spokesman Ameer Izzat while talking to 'The News.'"

"Troops Locked In Street Battles; 27 Militants, Three Soldiers Killed In Swat" "The Nation" (05/19)

"Security forces have killed another 27 militants including three top militant commanders in Malakand division where ground offensive has been launched to target important hideouts of the militants. Three security forces personnel including an officer embraced martyrdom and 17 soldiers got injured, Director General ISPR Major General Ather Abbas told a press briefing in Islamabad on Monday."

"Taliban Vow To Fight Until 'Last Breath'" "The Nation" (05/19)

"The Pakistani Taliban are vowing to resist military advances in the Swat Valley until their 'last breath.' A Swat Taliban spokesman, speaking with an American news agency by phone from an undisclosed location on Monday, said the Taliban are prepared for any onslaught."

"Operation In Decisive Phase: Official" "Dawn" (05/19)

"The displaced people from Swat, Dir and Buner would soon return to their native towns as military operation entered its decisive phase, said Malakand Commissioner Fazal Karim Khattak, while talking to 'Dawn' during his visit to relief camps on Monday."

"Weary Families On Way Back Home" "Dawn" (05/19)

"Weary families on Monday began trickling back into parts of North-Western Pakistan where fighting between government troops and Taliban has sent more than one million people fleeing, said Adnan Khan, a spokesman for the government's emergency response unit in Peshawar."

"IDPs Fear Taliban Spies In Camps, Reprisals In Hills, And Killer Mosquitoes" "The News" (05/19)

"The fear is so real that one can actually feel it. It is the fear of the Taliban returning, once the army 'concludes its operation in Swat and leaves.' It is fear you can read in the eyes of the Swat refugees. Talking to 'The News,' virtually every single refugee requested not to be named for the fear of the fatal consequences of the Taliban finding out the identity of their critics."

"Fleeing Civilians Attacked" "The News" (05/19)

"Several persons, including women and children, were killed and a number of others sustained injuries when families fleeing the military operation in Swat's Matta town were shelled while crossing a mountainous path to reach Karo Darra in Dir Upper on Monday, eyewitnesses and official sources said."

"Taliban Execute Soldiers" "The News" (05/19)

"Local Taliban in Mohmand Agency on Monday announced that they had killed two soldiers of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), who were in their custody, and threatened to shoot dead four others if

the government failed to meet their demand for exchange of prisoners."

"Taliban Seek Rupees 25 Million For Farahi" "The News" (05/19)

"Tehrik-e-Taliban has demanded Rupees 25 Million and release of its men in exchange for kidnapped afghan Ambassador-designate Abdul Khaliq Farahi."

"Concern in U.S. Over Reports Of N-Arsenal's Expansion" "Dawn" (05/19)

"... In a report on Monday, the New York Times quoted some Obama administration officials as saying: 'Pakistan's drive to spend heavily on new nuclear arms has been a source of growing concern, because the country is producing more nuclear material at a time when Washington is increasingly focused on trying to assure the security of an arsenal of 80 to 100 weapons so that they will never fall into the hands of Islamic insurgents.'"

"Pakistan Has Not Diverted U.S. Aid To N-Weapons: Mullen" "The News" (05/19)

"Chairman U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen on Monday said Pakistan had not diverted any U.S. assistance to advance its nuclear program. His remarks quashed the apprehensions cited in an American newspaper report."

"Pakistan Not Using Aid To Expand N-Arsenal: U.S." "Dawn" (05/19)

"The U.S. State Department indirectly confirmed on Monday that it too believed Pakistan was expanding its nuclear arsenal but said Islamabad was not using American aid to do so. 'I'm not going to address the issue of whether or not the Pakistanis are increasing their nuclear capability,' Acting Assistant Secretary Of State for Public Affairs Ian C. Kelly told a briefing in Washington. 'I think Admiral Mullen addressed that, and so I'll defer to the Pentagon and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.'"

"Capturing Pak Nukes Impossible, Officials Confident" "The News" (05/19)

"Pakistan's military establishment and the Foreign Ministry confidently describe the reports about the possible capture of nuclear arsenals by U.S. forces as an impossibility, notwithstanding any international conspiracy against the country's nuclear program. ISPR Director General Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas does see the Jewish and the Indian lobby behind the internal propaganda unleashed against Pakistan's nuclear program. He, however, insisted that Washington knows that these are non issues and that the Pakistan's nuclear program is secure."

"U.S. Prepares To Ferry Aid To Malakand IDPs" "Dawn" (05/19)

"The U.S. military is preparing to fly in humanitarian aid to Pakistan to help the nearly 1.5 million people forced to flee fighting in the country's northwest, the Pentagon said on Monday. The Defense Department was drawing up preliminary plans to ferry food, water and tents to help those displaced by the Pakistani army's offensive against Taliban militants, spokesman Bryan Whitman said."

"UN Says Over 2 Million IDPs In Pakistan" "Dawn" (05/19)

"Describing the situation in Pakistan as 'volatile' and 'confusing,' the United Nations' top humanitarian relief official said that so far almost 2.2 million people had been displaced as a consequence of the recent upheaval in the country."

"\$600-800 Million Needed To Cope With IDP Crisis" "Dawn" (05/19)

"Pakistan needs about \$600-800 million to cope with the influx of internally displaced people, Adviser to Prime Minister Shaukat Tarin said on Monday. Talking to a group of G-8 diplomats who had called on him on Monday, Mr. Tarin apprised them of the financial cost of worst humanitarian crisis faced by the country."

"Squad Run By Dick Cheney Assassinated Benazir: Herish" "Dawn"

(05/19)

"A special death squad assassinated Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on the orders of former U.S. vice-president Dick Cheney, claims an American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh. Mr. Hersh, a Washington-based journalist who writes for the New Yorker magazine and other prominent media outlets, also claims that the former vice-president was running an 'executive assassination ring' throughout the Bush years."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Call For Consensus," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/19)

"While it would be hard to avoid the impression that the present military campaign has been conducted under pressure of the U.S., the frustrating situation that the open and outright violations of the Swat peace deal by the militants had created for the government finally tilted the balance in favor of armed action.... Nevertheless, there is need for a careful assessment of the scenario to see that the military withdraws on the completion of its mission and in line with the policy of three D's (dialogue, deterrence and development) announced by the Prime Minister."

"Expediency Of Being Ignorant," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (05/19)

"The militants' actions in the garb of Taliban, their suicide attacks and technological expertise demonstrate that some big powers in connivance with the enemies of Pakistan are hatching a conspiracy to strike at the foundations of Pakistan from within. And their evil intentions are no secret. Their attempts to declare Pakistan a failed state, and particularly their propaganda against the security of Pakistani nuclear and strategic facilities are a part of this scheme."

"Hard Talk," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/19)

"Sadly, it seems to be impossible to achieve a durable peace without fighting the war that inevitably precedes it. Those we are fighting have proved themselves duplicitous to a fault, using 'peace deals' as the flimsiest of covers for their regrouping and re-arming and as a Trojan Horse for their real purpose - the setting up of a state-within-a-state governed by their own twisted values. The president's hard words, if translated into hard reality, may just be the turning of a new leaf. We have to honestly and with steely resolve face and fight the threat that looms over all of us. Anything less and we all lose."

"A Broader Front Against Taliban," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/19)

"The way the people at large have reacted to the savagery of the Taliban against the people of Swat is sure to make the resolve to fight the terrorists more firm. The resolve to take on the Taliban in FATA clearly demonstrates this new confidence. The Taliban must be stopped from coming to the help of warlord Fazlullah, and that can be done only by engaging the other warlord Baitullah Mehsud. Swat can be 'conquered' and the refugees could start returning, only to find that Baitullah has sent in his people from South Waziristan to start the massacre all over again.... Therefore, for now at least, Pakistan is well set to face up to the menace of the Taliban without taking an economic nosedive. It now depends on our internecine politicians to keep the national consensus against terrorism intact and bite the bullet of some collateral damage in the coming days."

"Fighting To The End," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/19)

"The war against the Taliban is Pakistan's own war but it is also in the interest of the region and the world at large that Pakistan remains stable and peaceful. The Western government should understand that if we do not get their financial support at this

critical hour 'we will lose the impetus we've managed to create ... against the Taliban,' especially at a time when all access to Swat has been banned."

"The Thought Of A Military Operation In Waziristan And Adam Khel," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/19)

"President Asif Ali Zardari has disclosed the Pakistan Army is getting ready to open up new war fronts in Waziristan and Dara Adam Khel, following the operation in Swat.... Zardari has given this 'good' news to the nation in celebration of getting one billion dollars from America and Europe. This also means that Zardari has assured Obama administration of waging a war inside Pakistan in return to \$1.5 billion annual assistance.... It is imprudent to compare Waziristan and Dara Adam Khel with Swat. The people of Waziristan and Dara Adam Khel are valiant fighters.... Zardari is President of Pakistan and he should think of its future and interest instead of being bothered about the entire world."

"Vow To Fight A Long Battle Against Militants," an editorial in Lahore-based populist Urdu daily "Waqt" (cir. 10,000) (05/19)

"We hope that the international community will consider Pakistan's war against terrorist as its own war and will lend all possible support to it. This is imperative as Pakistan's victory would mean the world's victory."

"And Now Waziristan," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (05/19)

"President Zardari has perhaps forgotten that Waziristan Agency would prove to be more difficult than the area of Malakand Division. On the other hand, an impression is growing that the ongoing military operation in Swat is being conducted in order to appease Americans."

"Ulema Against Taliban," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/19)

"The outcome of the conference is positive, for the Taliban should note that they cannot fool the people any more in the name of the Sharia and that their barbarism and bloodletting in the name of religion have forced large sections of society to unite against them.... We hope the government will build on the consensus that now seems to be developing in the country and act with resolve to crush the insurgency. The Taliban are responsible for the deaths of thousands of Pakistani civilians and soldiers; they have used civilians as a shield, and they have brought misery to more than a million people by making them flee their homes."

"Ulema Rightly Reactivate Themselves," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/19)

"Religious sensitivities and moorings are deep rooted in our veins and only religious scholars can motivate the masses to rise against un-Islamic acts of militants in Swat and FATA.... Enlightened Ulema, Mashaikh and religious scholars did not pay any heed to misinterpretation of Islam by these illiterate and self-proclaimed religious leaders.... It is still not too late for the Ulema and Islamic scholars to play their role."

"Stop Nonsense On Pakistan Nukes," an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (05/19)

"Whenever any Pakistani official says that Taliban are eyeing Pakistan's nuclear assets, he or she is, in a way, expressing doubts the capabilities and prowess of the Pakistan Army. The loyalty and allegiance with Pakistan requires that such statements must not be issued rather the world should be enlightened about Pakistan's military might."

"Pak Nukes Are Safe," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/19)

"There is no ground for painting a doomsday scenario. Perhaps, those who are so paranoid are more concerned over the fact that

Pakistan was the only Muslim country of the nuclear club. Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik rightly pointed out that if Pakistan could acquire nuclear weapons, it also knew how to protect them."

"Pakistan Is Besieged," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (05/19)

"U.S. President Obama has said that the U.S. can consider all options, if Pakistan got less stable.... U.S. Admiral Mike Mullen has also leveled a charge that Pakistan is adding to its nuclear arsenal. We think this latest accusation is a part of the disinformation drive to besiege Pakistan, and to take control of its nuclear weapons. Attempts are being made to destabilize Pakistan for the last seven years, and now it seems that the final round is being played."

"American Troops On Our Eastern Borders," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (05/19)

"With the victory of Congress Party in the Indian parliamentary elections, the U.S. has decided to implement its plans to dominate South Asia. The possibility of a new war in this region cannot be ruled out altogether. Now there is no doubt anymore that the objective of the U.S. foreign and defense policies is to take Pakistan's nuclear weapons in their control, and that is the reason of besieging Pakistan from all of its borders."

"Benazir Bhutto's Martyrdom; U.S. Journalist's Revelation," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/19)

"With the American journalist's disclosure about Benazir Bhutto's assassination no justification is left to have the murder investigated by UN by paying the organization huge sum of money. If American journalist is accusing Dick Cheney's death squad of the murder citing solid evidence then this tragedy should be investigated on these lines. President Zardari should get a police case registered against Dick Cheney and demand his custody from America.... Stories about American hand in the death of President Ziaul Haq in plane crash had repeatedly been brought to fore in the past, in which American Ambassador Raphael was sacrificed."

"Tamil Tigers' Defeat In Sri Lanka," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (05/19)

"The defeat of Tamil Tigers has also become a source of encouragement for the Pakistani government and people. It is quite likely that [like Sri Lanka] Pakistan would also have to wage a long struggle against extremists and militants. The government needs to continue its operation against those who challenge its writ.... At the same time, the government should hold talks with Baloch separatists and inform the world about Indian role in this dangerous game. If the government launches a campaign against [Indian role in Balochistan] the day is not far when India gives up supporting Baloch separatists just as it has given up supporting the Tamil Tigers"

"Elimination Of Tamil Tigers," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (05/19)

"Those who analyze the reason for the defeat of the Tamil rebel movement are interested in learning whether Pakistan would also deal successfully with the armed resistance known as the Taliban. They also wonder whether Pakistan would also have to wage such a long war... On the one hand, Pakistan is encouraged that the unrest in Sri Lanka has come to an end, yet on the other it has concerns that India and other powerful countries that spread unrest might strengthen non-state actors in Pakistan to create a civil war- like situation here."

"Consensus Against Violent Groups," an op-ed by Rasul Bakhsh Rais in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/19)

"As we have seen, it can be more divisive than uniting when the violent groups have a strong ethnic social support base and are plugged into nationwide religious networks. The second important

reason for our failure is a lack of clarity among our political elites on the identity of the enemy.... The picture becomes more confusing when there is more than one enemy, internal and external, and prevents the formation of a national consensus both on the identification of threat and how to deal with them.... We need to have clarity on these threats and how best to use our social, political and military resources to counter them, and to bring violent groups into mainstream politics and society."

"Army Action - Short And Effective," an op-ed by Tasneem Noorani in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/19)

"The outcome of prolonged stay of Malakand displaced persons could even lead to Talibanization amongst them, given their frustrations combined with the time at their disposal. It could be criminalizing a perfectly law abiding population, in the face of lack of income and ample spare time. It would be a traumatized new generation of children, who would grow up in squalid conditions, rather than the secure environs of their lush green habitats. So a prolonged army action until all Talibans of Swat are decimated is not an option. Apart from loosing its awe, if prolonged, it would loose its impact, as most militants disappear. The most effective objective, which I am sure is being perused by the army, is to eliminate the leadership, destroy headquarters, the command and control structure, training camps, ammunition dumps and then to declare a halt to the operation, perhaps in a maximum of a total of four to six weeks."

"Well Said, General," an op-ed by Kamran Shafi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/19)

"For the very first time, a clear and unambiguous statement from Gen Ashfaq Kayani: that the army was capable of fighting an insurgency. And that all it needed was specialized equipment and weaponry.... Kudos to you, general, if you really mean what you say.... To the Americans I say: instead of toys for the boys such as the F-16s which are not allowed by you to be used in an offensive role anyway, please immediately supply our army with night-vision equipment, attack helicopters, and close-support aircraft such as the A-10 Warthog."
Patterson